

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 010677

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: UK, SE, IO

SUBJECT: DISPOSITION OF BIOT ISLANDS

REF: A. LONDON 7891 B. NAIROBI 221

1. FOR LONDON: YOU MAY INFORM BRITISH THAT AFTER HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW WE HAVE ARRIVED AT FOLLOWING POSITION ON RETURN OF ALDABRA, FARQUHAR AND DES ROCHES TO THE SEYCHELLES AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

A. THE BIOT WAS FORMED IN ORDER TO MAKE THE ISLANDS AVAILABLE FOR DEFENSE PURPOSES SHOULD THE NEED ARISE. THUS ANY CONTEMPLATED RETURN OF THESE ISLANDS TO THE SEYCHELLES
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SHOULD BE RELATED TO PRESENT AND FORESEEN US REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE BIOT AND THE ENTIRE REGION, INCLUDING THE NEED FOR THE AIR FORCE SATELLITE CONTROL FACILITY AT MAHE AND AN ALREADY IDENTIFIED REQUIREMENT FOR A JET CAPABLE AIRFIELD IN THE WEST CENTRAL REGION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE BIOT REMAINS A VALID CONSIDERATION IF SATISFACTORY DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS CANNOT BE MADE WITH THE SEYCHELLES.

B. CONSEQUENTLY, RETURN OF THE BIOT ISLANDS COULD BE UNDERTAKEN ONLY IF AGREEMENT IS REACHED WITH THE SEYCHELLES FOR ACCEPTABLE DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS; SPECIFICALLY:

1. CONTINUATION OF THE SATELLITE CONTROL FACILITY ON MAHE.

2. REGULAR USE OF MAHE CIVIL AIRFIELD BY US AND UK MILITARY AIRCRAFT.

2. AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SEYCHELLES ON RETURN OF THE ISLANDS SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE:

A. DENIAL OF USE OF ALDABRA, FARQUHAR, AND DES ROCHES, AND OTHER SEYCHELLES ISLANDS TO HOSTILE POWERS.

B. ASSURANCES THAT US AND UK WOULD BE PERMITTED ACCESS TO THE THREE ISLANDS IF REQUIRED IN FUTURE.

3. WE ASSUME BRITISH WILL WANT TO INFORM SEYCHELLOIS LEADERS OF THIS POSITION DURING JANUARY CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. WE WOULD EXPECT TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH SEYCHELLES ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR SATELLITE CONTROL STATION, AND ACCESS TO MAHE AIRFIELD, AS WELL AS ON CONSIDERATIONS UNDER PARA 2 ABOVE, BEGINNING SHORTLY AFTER CONFERENCE. IF SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE IN TIME, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO SIGN AGREEMENT WITH POST-INDEPENDENCE SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT ON FACILITIES AND WITH BRITISH ON RETURN OF BIOT ISLANDS IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE, OR PERHAPS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SIGNING OF UK-SEYCHELLES INDEPENDENCE AGREEMENTS. HOWEVER, TO TAKE CARE OF ANY SLIPPAGE WE WOULD APPRECIATE IF BRITISH WOULD INCLUDE THE

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1966 AGREEMENT COVERING THE SATELLITE CONTROL FACILITY AMONG THE LIST OF AGREEMENTS WHICH WOULD BE ASSUMED BY SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT UPON INDEPENDENCE IF THEY FOLLOW PATTERN OF OTHER BRITISH COLONIES IN ACCEPTING UK TREATY OBLIGATIONS FOR AN INTERIM PERIOD. THIS WOULD FACILITATE SIMPLE EXCHANGE OF NOTES WITH SEYCHELLES PRESERVING US RIGHTS, IF NECESSARY TO GAIN ADEQUATE TIME FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT UNDUE PRESSURE.

4. FOR AMBASSADOR MARSHALL: RECOMMEND YOU TELL MANCHAM WE HAVE INFORMED HMG OF OUR POSITION ON RETURN OF BIOT ISLANDS, AND UNDERSTAND BRITISH WILL DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT AT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. SINCE MATTER CONCERNS THE BIOT, WHICH SUBJECT OF US-UK AGREEMENT AND IMPORTANT TO DEFENSE PLANNING OF BOTH COUNTRIES, WE BELIEVE IT APPROPRIATE AT THIS POINT TO CONVEY THE BROAD OUTLINES OF OUR

POSITION FIRST TO HMG AND TO ENTER INTO MORE SPECIFIC DISCUSSIONS WITH SEYCHELLES FOLLOWING CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. WE ARE IN ADDITION DEVELOPING A NEGOTIATING PACKAGE IN RELATION TO OUR CONTINUED USE OF THE SATELLITE CONTROL FACILITY, WHICH WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS WITH THE SEYCHELLOIS AT A LATER DATE. KISSINGER

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